

Japanese Gulch Subcommittee Meeting –June 24, 2015

Rosehill Community Center, Art Room

7:00pm - Opening:

Jennifer Berner opened the work session with clarification of some of the survey results and how misinformation may be present within the results. Specifically, there was some confusion of which parcels were which in relationship to improvements, such as the location of the Senior Center and the extent of the development in the different areas. Jennifer also noted that even though there were a lot of comments regarding “keep the Gulch the same as it is today” that in order to protect the entire forest, the Precht Property/76th Street Trailhead cannot be left in its current state. It must be improved in order to limit the expansion of the invasive species. Jennifer then prompted the group to discuss some commonalities found in the Public Outreach Workbook. The group stated:

- “Protect” was a primary focus,
- Natural and feeling of isolation was a primary draw of visiting Japanese Gulch within the proximity to the larger developments.

The sub-committee was asked to review the guiding principles that were established at the start of the process and make sure they still apply to the project. They all agreed these principles were still relevant.

- Protect & preserve the natural integrity of Japanese Gulch
- Formalize access and uses within Japanese Gulch
- Provide safe and enjoyable experience for the public
- Produce a sustainable development strategy
- Provide for a wide range of users
- Encourage stewardship and collaboration between all parties

The sub-committee was then asked to review the “Goals to Achieve a Livable Mukilteo” section of the Comprehensive Plan and the sub-goals of the different areas to see how which sections apply to the Japanese Gulch Master Plan project. Karl Almgren led the conversation regarding identifying priorities for Japanese Gulch Master Plan to the sub-goals identified in the Draft 2035 Comprehensive Plan. The discussion identified the following sub-goals as priorities as important to the Japanese Gulch Master Plan:

- Protecting Environmental Resources & Habitats
- Fostering Green Parks & Preserving Open Space
- Modeling Environmentally-Friendly Products
- Transparent and Responsive Leadership
- Collaborative Community Planning
- Publicly Acknowledging the Value of Volunteerism
- An Engaged Public with Equitable Opportunities to Participate
- Honoring Our History

- Thriving Arts and Cultural Events with Widespread Participation
- Education Opportunities for All
- Acceptance of Diversity
- Pedestrian & Bike Friendly
- Clean Water & Air
- Recreational Opportunities for All Ages
- Access to Healthy Foods
- Ability to Age in Place
- Create Problem-solving Partnerships

The discussion also identified that the following sub-goals are a by-product of the implementation of the priorities above:

- Maintaining Neighborhoods
- Balanced Growth
- (Comment made that Japanese Gulch will provide attractions to telecommuting with the development of 1gig internet, potentially expanding high tech industries to more home offices).

There was a lot of conversation around the concepts of what Arts & Cultural Awareness mean to Japanese Gulch and specifically, what is the history of the story. Nic Morin, with Barker Landscape Architects, expanded the group's conversation by bringing in the concept of 'Cultural Planning' ideology in order to best reflect the dynamic history and culture of Japanese Gulch. Several cultural and historical concepts included:

- 'Welcome to All Ages' identifies the support that the diversity and history of Japanese Gulch extends beyond Mukilteo's acceptance of Japanese Immigrant workers, but includes the inclusion of different user groups (BMX) and age groups (children through seniors).
- The discussion continued to identify what the story of Japanese Gulch is and how does that relate to the landscape. Some members felt that the area was now Japanese only by name, and that the area should refrain from over extending the use of the Japanese History. Other members agreed that the history of Japanese Gulch should reflect the multiple cultural aspects of Mukilteo within the area including the Native Americans, Lumber/Logging Industry, Japanese, and Caucasian history. The discussion identified that the many stories may represent a transect story with Japanese Culture within the 5th Street Area, Native American Culture within Upper Gulch, and perhaps history of the Grange Hall on the 76th Street Trailhead. At the end of the discussion the subcommittee was in agreement to have a stronger connect of the Japanese history in the lower gulch and not as much in the upper areas of the Gulch.
- There is a bit of a struggle with how or if art should be included in the Japanese Gulch Master Plan. The discussion identified the importance of maintaining the area within a natural atmosphere and that any artwork should be integrated seamlessly into the landscape. This idea was to avoid the sculpture park atmosphere.

The discussion transitioned from general concepts and priorities towards site specific development starting with the waterfront transition to the lower gulch area. The conversation centered on connecting the lower gulch across the railroad tracks and connecting it to the promenade. One comment/story that was mentioned was the Japanese Torigate that can be utilized to represent the “Gateway to Sea, Gateway to Land”. This concept is consistent with the focus for Salmon access to Japanese Gulch through the development of the estuary. The correct use of a Torigate or other similar designs, should implement the overall goal of connectivity by creating a ‘visualization-bridge’ across the railroad that invites people walking the Promenade to access Japanese Gulch.

As the conversation moved further south into the Lower Gulch, Nic talked about looking at changing the boardwalk path to a circle loop out to the Fish Ladder to provide additional educational outreach as well as reduce cost. Staff reminded the subcommittee that if we identify that protecting the environment is a priority, then we must consider the impacts of integrating the boardwalk within the wetland area. Staff clarified that a wetland boardwalk is a reasonable project and that potential mitigation maybe required. The conversation expanded that this boardwalk could be like Narbeck, or Yesler Swamp that supports accessibility to stroller, ADA, and wheel-based users. The alignment of this ‘Fish Ladder Loop’ would maintain the existing trail, and provide a ‘swoop’ connection leading back to the trailhead. Staff clarified that the western parcel of the Lower Gulch is the most valuable habit restoration area in Japanese Gulch and provides the ‘biggest bang for the buck’.

The conversation focused on the different user groups of the Lower Gulch. The subcommittee recognized that survey results showcased a dichotomy between multi-use trails and separate-use trails.. The conversation identified that trail designations/restrictions should be refocused to ‘trail orientation’ that allows all uses. A ‘trail orientation’ would permit both Mt. Bikers and Pedestrians, but the trail design would be oriented towards pedestrian amenities or bike amenities. Any boardwalk design should accommodate both uses, but additional signage/environmental constraints may be needed to provide correct orientation.

The conversation expanded to discuss the connectivity from the future new Multi-Modal Station throughout all of Japanese Gulch. The clear desire from the subcommittee was that Japanese Gulch should be ‘Everything the Speedway isn’t’ and should promote connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and within a larger framework of trail systems. The discussion included conversation about alternative routes to the Lower Japanese Gulch trail for bikes, by utilizing Mukilteo Lane, but was deemed less favorable as a preference. This topic will be discussed more as the subcommittee talks about the overall trail layout.

Staff explained to the subcommittee about the challenges of reaching out to BNSF to develop a partnership to provide improved safety within Japanese Gulch.

The final major themed conversation was in relationship to 5th Street including pedestrian amenities, connectivity, traffic calming, City branding, and crime prevention. Officer Colt Davis was present at the meeting and expanded on the CPTED principles and current challenges along 5th Street. Officer Davis informed the subcommittee that there are several vehicle break-ins that occur on 5th Street near the

east side of Japanese Gulch due to the easy access to hide in the woods. The conversation identified that some traffic calming projects may implement CPTED principles such as on-street formalized parking, street lighting, etc.

Staff identified that some traffic calming mechanisms may be identified within the future Active Transportation Plan. Staff expanded that this area may lend itself to a 'branding' traffic calming mechanism such as speed tables, pavement changes, and other similar characteristics. The subcommittee expressed the interest of reducing the distance between the Dog Park & Lower Gulch Trailhead and expressed the challenges with individuals not utilizing 5th Street Bridge, but crossing under illegally using BNSF property. Staff explained that at times distances cannot be reduced, but the streetscape can be vastly improved to provide higher levels of walkability. The subcommittee confirmed that street art/sculptures may be appropriate along 5th Street to aid in traffic calming. Nic, added that one of the best methods of traffic calming was placing a human scale object near the roadway. Other 5th Street items included moving the speed zone further east, and provide better connection to Centennial Park. Staff noted that 5th Street has significant ROW, but may be constrained if the desire is to have two 10' walkways.

Meeting concluded at 9pm.